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SECRET INVASION
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Fantastic Four
DIRECT EDITION
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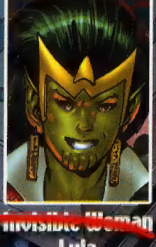
SECRET INVASION

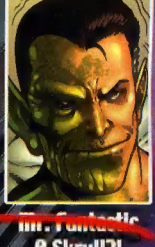
Fantastic Four

The Human Torch
Johnny Storm

The Thing
Ben Grimm



~~Invisible Woman~~
Lyja



~~Mr. Fantastic~~
A Skrull?!

The Skrull Invasion has begun and the Fantastic Four are the first victims! When a Skrull posing as Reed Richards captures Sue Richards (aka The Invisible Woman), she's replaced by a Skrull dupe – who hijacks the Negative Zone portal in the Baxter Building, plunging Ben Grimm, Johnny Storm and Richards children, Franklin and Val, into the Negative Zone. The Skrull, still posing as Sue, tries to convince Johnny that Ben is in fact a Skrull, but Johnny sees through her lies, and the dupe reveals herself...as Lyja, Skrull Warrior and former love of Johnny Storm!

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"THE BRIEF (BUT BRIGHT) LOVES OF JONATHAN SPENCER STORM," A SHORT PERSONAL ESSAY BY, WELL...
...ME.
IN THE BEGINNING, THERE WAS HANNAH HENRICKSON, WHO LIVED UP THE STREET FROM MY PARENTS' BOARDING HOUSE.
I CALLED HER "HANNAH BANANA," SHE HAD RED HAIR--AND A TREEHOUSE.
GAMES
I WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD, HANNAH WAS TEN... (WHAT CAN I SAY, I'VE ALWAYS BEEN INTO OLDER WOMEN...)
I THOUGHT WE'D LAST FOREVER...
BUT THEN CAME HIGH SCHOOL. AND TRACK STARDOM.
7
AND, HEL-LO, CHEERLEADERS.
GO GLENVILLE!
GO JOHNNY!
GO GLENVILLE!
GO JOHNNY!
STATE
BLAH-BLAH-BLAH, THEN I BECAME THE HUMAN TORCH, BLAH-BLAH-BLAH, AND MY DATING TOOK A TURN FOR THE, UHM...

...SURREAL. IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER:
THERE WAS FRANKIE RAYE. NICE GIRL, WE HAD A LOT IN COMMON...
...BUT THEN SHE BECAME NOVA, HERALD OF GALACTUS, AND--I MEAN--HOW DO YOU COMPETE WITH THAT?
I MEAN, THE GUY'S HUGE.
NAMORITA WAS A LOT FUN, BUT ULTIMATELY...
JOHNNY, WAIT, YOU'RE--
YOU'RE TOTALLY DEHYDRATING ME--
...OIL AND WATER, YOU KNOW?
CRYSTAL...
CRYSTAL WAS GREAT, AND I WAS FINE WITH THE WHOLE INHUMAN THING...
...BUT I NEVER GOT OVER HER CHOOSING QUICKSILVER INSTEAD OF ME--
IT'S NOT YOU, JOHNNY, IT'S ME...
I GUESS I NEVER REALIZED HOW IMPORTANT SPEED WAS TO A RELATIONSHIP UNTIL I MET PIETRO...
--EVEN THOUGH SHE EVENTUALLY RECANTED. (TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE, CRYS...)

LAST BUT NOT LEAST, OF COURSE, THERE WAS...
LYJA.
OH MY GOD.

JOHNNY STORM... SPEECHLESS?
COLOR ME SHOCKED.
LYJA, I--I THOUGHT--
--THAT I WAS DEAD?
NO SUCH LUCK, I'M AFRAID--
WHAT? NO-- I--I--
YOU HAVEN'T GIVEN ME A SECOND'S THOUGHT, HAVE YOU?
IN ALL THIS TIME? ALL THESE MONTHS? OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND, AS YOU HUMANS LIKE TO SAY?
RIGHT. "US HUMANS."
I ALMOST FORGOT--

THIS IS PART OF AN INVASION, RIGHT?
THAT'S WHY YOU BLASTED US INTO THE NEGATIVE ZONE?
THAT'S AN OVERSIMPLIFICATION--
--BUT YES!
OH, AND BY THE WAY?

FWOOM--
WHOA--
REMEMBER HOW I LOST MY ABILITY TO FIRE ENERGY BLASTS?
WELL, I GOT IT BACK--
A LOT'S CHANGED, JOHNNY--
CLANGGG!
HNNFFGH--!
AND YET, HERE WE ARE, STILL BICKERING LIKE AN OLD MARRIED COUPLE--
WHERE'S MY SISTER, SKRULL? WHERE'S REED?

MEANWHILE.
FRANKLIN AND VALERIA RICHARDS.
...98, 99, 100—
HIDING IN THE FANTASTIC FOUR'S KITCHEN.
A HUNDRED SECONDS HAVE GONE BY SINCE FRANKLIN HEARD ANYTHING. A HUNDRED SECONDS OF DEAD SILENCE.
MEANING, HOPEFULLY, THAT HIS UNCLE BEN TOOK CARE OF WHATEVER THOSE CRAZY BUGS WERE.
IT'S OKAY, VAL, YOU CAN COME OUT NOW...
I GOT A PLAN!
OOOOH... MOMMY AND DADDY MAD.
WHEN THEY SEE THIS? TOTALLY.
THAT'S WHY WE GOTTA MAKE 'EM PROUD OF US.

WHERE WE GOING, FRANKLIN?
ONE OF DAD'S SECRET ROOMS, VAL--
WE'RE UPGRADING OUR STATUS TO FULL MEMBERS--
WHAT ABOUT UNCA BEN?
"--MISERABLE, FRIGGIN', NEGATIVE ZONE CRITTERS!"
KER-RASHH!!
SHEESH--
I'VE HEARDA BEDBUGS BEFORE, BUT THIS IS RIDICULOUS!
RYEEE

OKEY-DOKEY--

NOW--

WE'RE--
?!

COOKING--!

WITH FULL HEAT, LIKE THEY SAY IN THE COMIC BOOKS...
OY. WHICH REMINDS ME...

"...WHERE THE HECK DID FLAME-BRAIN GO WHEN ALL THIS STARTED?"
ZOOOMF--
KA-GRASSHHHA--!
WHY-- AREN'T-- YOU-- BURNING?

KRACKK!!
AS FOR [illegible] AND [illegible] IN-LAW...
THE INVASION HAS BEEN [illegible] ACROSS [illegible] GALAXIES.
YOUR FAMILY AND ITS RESOURCES REPRESENTED THE GREATEST THREAT TO OUR SUCCESS.
...
THE LONGER YOU GO WITHOUT TELLING ME WHAT YOU DID TO THEM--
YOU'RE [illegible] THAT'S [illegible] THEY'RE [illegible]
[illegible]
THEY'LL PROVE INDISPENSABLE ON THE [illegible] SIDE.
ONCE WE'RE ALL ENSLAVED, YOU MEAN?

FFWOOSHHH!
LY-LYJA--
BE-BEHIND YOU--
OH, YES. "BEHIND ME."
HONESTLY, GIVE ME SOME--
POLICE
"BEHIND YOU," I SAID--
A POLICE CRUISER, COMING THROUGH THE SAME PORTAL THE BAXTER BUILDING DID--

CRASSSHHHH!!
YOU... YOU SAVED ME...
YEAH, SO MAYBE--
--MAYBE [redacted] COULD STOP TRYING TO, I DON'T KNOW, KILL EACH OTHER FOR A FEW MINUTES?
YOU KNOW...FOR OLD TIMES' SAKE?
JOHNNY...
HERE'S WHY I'M AN IDIOT...
I KNOW THAT SHE'S A VIOLENT ALIEN HELLBENT ON WORLD DOMINATION. I KNOW WE'RE TRAPPED IN [redacted] DIMENSION THAT WARPS THE LAWS OF TIME AND PHYSICS. I KNOW THAT MY IMMEDIATE PRIORITY SHOULD BE RECONNECTING WITH MY PEEPS AND GETTING BACK TO NYC...
I KNOW ALL THESE THINGS AND MORE...

...BUT I DO IT ANYWAY.
FOR OLD TIMES' SAKE.
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WHICH IS WHY, WHEN A TENTACLE-THINGIE SLITHERS OUT OF ONE OF THE NEGATIVE ZONE'S NASTIER INHABITANTS--
LYJA--
--AND ENSNARES US, IT'S KIND OF LIKE: "YEAH, SHOULDA SEEN THAT COMING..."
JOHNNY!!
REED KEEPS THREATENING TO DO A ZOOLOGICAL CATALOGUE OF THE NEGATIVE ZONE'S BIOLOGICAL SPECIMENS: WHAT LIVES THERE AND HOW...
ME? I JUST THINK IT'S LIKE THAT STEPHEN KING STORY, THE MIST.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S OUT THERE, AND I DON'T WANNA KNOW...
I MEAN, ALL THAT NEEDS TO BE SAID ABOUT THIS THING IS THAT IT LOOKS LIKE A JELLYFISH, AND THAT WE DON'T WANT TO BE PULLED INTO ITS BODY. I MEAN, 10 TO 1 WE'D BE TRAPPED, SLOWLY DISSOLVING IN THERE, FLOATING IN ITS PLASMA/ACID STOMACH...
LYJA, I'M GONNA LET YOU GO--
NO--! JOHNNY---!!
I HAVE TO--
JOHNNY!!!
LISTEN TO ME: STAY CALM--
GRAB THE TENTACLE WITH YOUR HANDS--
THIS COULD GO EITHER WAY--
LYJA COULD COMPLETELY LOSE IT--

--BUT...I'M BETTING ON GREEN.
WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE, LYJA'S A SKRULL WARRIOR--
SO SHE PULLS IT TOGETHER--
TAKES THE BULL BY THE HORNS--
I DO THE SAME--
(IMMEDIATELY, MY HANDS START TO BURN; THIS THING MUST BE TOXIC TO THE TOUCH--)
NOW POUR IT ON--
EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT--
I DO THE SAME--
AS HOT AS I CAN GO--
AND PLEASE, GOD, LET IT BE ENOUGH...

MEANWHILE.
THE BAXTER BUILDING.
AS BEN GRIMM WORKS HIS WAY BACK TO FRANKLIN AND VALERIA.
AWWWW...
...SQUID.
HUHHRRR?
=SIGH=
WHERE'S AN ALIEN SPERM-WHALE WHEN YOU NEED ONE?
IT'S OKAY, UNCLE BEN--
VAL AND ME GOT THIS ONE--
UH...

WHAT DO YA THINK, VAL? PULSE CANNONS AT FIFTY PERCENT?
YEAH!
YEAH, TOTALLY. TARGETING...
WHOA--
FWOOM--
RRRR

'CEPT FER THE FACT THAT YER WEARING A BATTLE-SUIT... OTHER THAN THAT, I'M SWELL.
IT'S DAD'S. HE MADE IT, BUT THEN MOM YELLED AT HIM FOR MAKING IT EVEN THOUGH DAD SAYS IT'S DEFENSIVE, SO HE DIDN'T GIVE IT TO US, EXCEPT I KNEW WHERE IT WAS AND--AND--
--ISN'T IT SO COOL! LIKE IRON MAN!
YAY, IRON MAN!!
YEAH, AND BROTHER, DO I WISH MR. TIN CAN WUZ HERE...
LOOKIT YER DAD'S LAB...
YEAH, LIKE THE KITCHEN, BUT WAY WORSE.
DADDY'S LAB SMASHED!!
THE SIXTY-FOUR MILLION DOLLAR QUESTION BEING...
WHO'S GONNA UN-SMASH IT?
UNCLE JOHNNY--
DOUBTFUL, VAL. IF IT DOESN'T HAVE FOUR WHEELS OR BLONDE HAIR, YER UNC'S A HOPELESS CASE...
NO, UNCLE BEN, SHE MEANS LOOK--

--IT'S UNCLE JOHNNY!
SUE WASN'T SUE, SHE WAS REALLY LYJA--
SHE'S PART OF A HUGE SKRULL INVASION--
THIS ALIEN JELLYFISH TRIED TO EAT HER, BUT WE BROKE FREE--
THE IRONY IS: I'VE HAD WEIRDER DAYS...

LYJA? JEEZ-LOUISE, IT'S ALWAYS SOMETHING WITH YOU, HUH?
SHE PASSED OUT FROM THE STRAIN, BUT THAT'S A GOOD THING.
WE NEED TO GET BACK TO FIND REED AND SUE, LIKE, YESTERDAY--
I WAS JUST SAYING...
UNLESS YER IQ'S SUDDENLY WAY HIGHER...
THAT'S GONNA BE A PROBLEM, MATCH-HEAD...
YEAH, NO JOKE.
EVEN IF SHE WERE AWAKE, I DON'T THINK LYJA WOULD BE WILLING--OR ABLE--TO FIX...WHATEVER NEEDS TO BE FIXED TO SEND US BACK.
TRUTHFULLY? I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT WE'D START FIXING FIRST, BEN.
SO WHAT, WE'RE SITTING THIS ONE OUT? WAITING FOR SOME NEGATIVE ZONE DINOSAUR TO EAT US?
OR FOR THE AVENGERS OR THE X-MEN TO SAVE US?
PRETTY HUMILIATING, IF YA ASK ME...
DAD'S PRISON...
HUH?
WHADDID HE SAY?

DAD'S PRISON IS IN THE NEGATIVE ZONE, RIGHT?
AND HAS LOTS OF BAD GUYS IN IT?
UH...
YEAH, ACTUALLY.
OH, GOD, WE'RE ABOUT TO BE SHOWN UP BY A SEVEN-YEAR-OLD...
SO MAYBE ONE OF THE BAD GUYS CAN HELP US?
MAYBE ONE OF THE BAD GUYS KNOWS HOW TO FIX THINGS?
GRANTED, THE SEVEN-YEAR-OLD IN QUESTION IS REED RICHARDS'S SON...
WE...WE WOULD'VE THOUGHT OF THAT EVENTUALLY--RIGHT, BEN?
I MEAN, WE HAVE BEEN DOING THIS A WHILE, HAVEN'T WE?
FRANKIE...
YER A GENIUS.
AWESOME. SO CAN VAL AND I GO TO THE PRISON WITH YOU GUYS?
TO RESCUE A BAD GUY?
YAY, PRISON!
YOU GOTTA ADMIT...
...THE KIDS' GOT SPUNK.
NEXT: PROJECT BREAKOUT!